FORD SAYS COMMITTEE PRODUCES SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE

Congressman Harold Ford participated in the first series of public hearings of the House Assassinations Committee. Ford asked the Committee to make public the summarized version of the previous interview the Committee had with Ray which will allow the American people to see for themselves the inconsistencies in Ray's story.

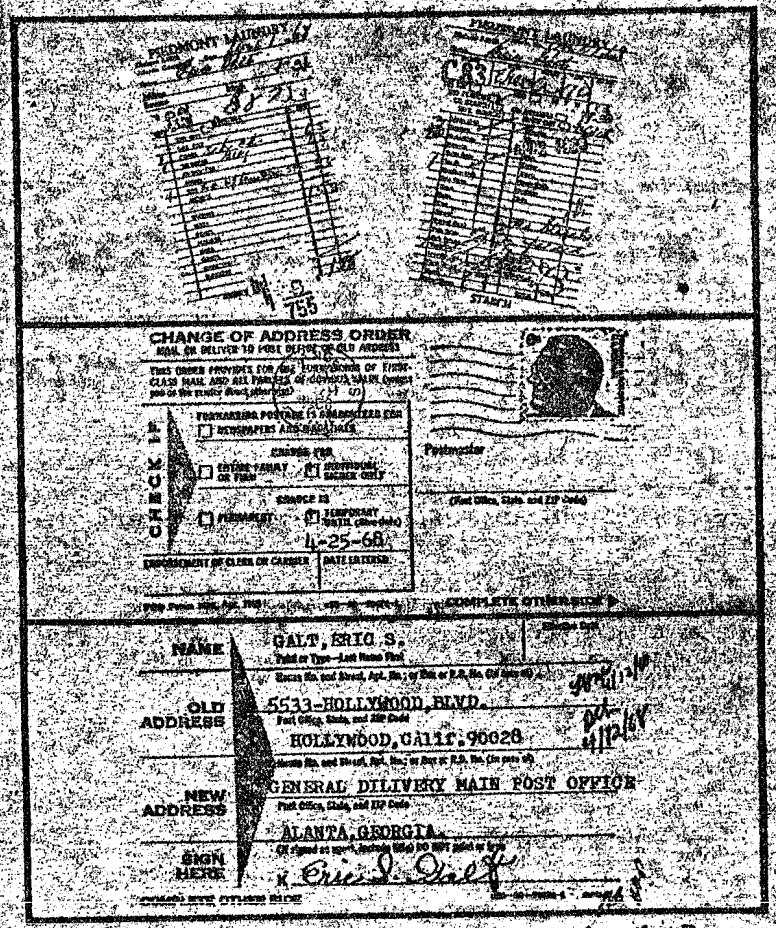
The Committee, created in September 1976 to begin a new inquiry into the murders of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1968, culminated with a dramatic three-day appearance by James Earl Ray, convicted killer of Dr. King.

Ray's claim that he did not shoot the black civil rights leader appeared to convert few — if any — supporters to his cause and was completely eroded by the Committee's systematic probing into the credibility of his story. Ray's defense of being framed by a mysterious figure "Raoul" has never been substantiated by any evidence.

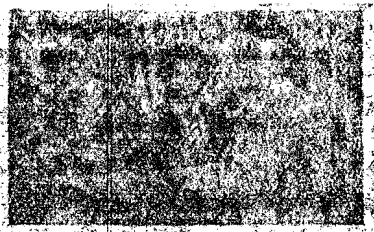
Ray admitted that he had visited several southern cities including Atlanta in mid-March 1968 but that he had left Atlanta March 28 for Birmingham and had not returned. Ray said he was certain of the fact and if the Committee could prove otherwise, he would take complete responsibility for the King Assassination. A laundry slip indicating Ray was in Atlanta April 1 and testimony from witnesses who had seen Ray on that date was introduced by the Committee.

Under questioning, Ray admitted he had made an unqualified admission of guilt which led to his 99-year prison sentence. He maintains his plea was made under pressure by his then attorney, Percy Foreman. Ray alleges that Foreman told him if he did not plead guilty the FBI might injure his family, that Blacks might burn down the town in retaliation for King's death, and that he might receive some of the profits from a book on the shooting by author William Bradford Huie.

One positive result from the week's hearings was the exoneration of Memphis from any guilt or strain caused by the occurrence of the assassination there. Congressman Harold Ford in his opening statement before the Committee said, "Unfortunately, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated in the city where I was born and raised. The people of the City of Memphis were as much a victim of this shocking American tragedy as was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." The evidence from the Committee study showed that the assassination could have occurred in any city and that Memphis was a victim of circumstances.



The Atlanta laundry tickets were used as evidence to show that Ray was in Atlanta when he said he wasn't. Other evidence included change-of-address notice indicating that Ray was heading for Atlanta after leaving Los Angeles. Ray testified that he was heading for New Orleans and was stunned by the appearance of this evidence.



Pictured with Representative Harold Ford are George and Emory Gordon, owners of Gordon Cosmetics. The Gordon brothers operate a regional partnership firm. Great difficulties were encountered by the brothers in their attempt to obtain an SBA loan. However, with the assistance from the Congressional office, they were successful in receiving a $100,000 expansion loan.

Hearing Uncovers High Poverty Among Senior Citizens

The House Select Committee on Aging recently took the first comprehensive look at elderly poverty by the Congress at a hearing entitled "Poverty Among America's Aged." The hearing, which stemmed from the concern with the staggering rate of poverty among the aged, featured testimony by Reverend Ralph Abernathy, pastor and civil rights leader and R. Sargent Shriver.

During the hearing, it was noted that there are 3.3 million elderly people with incomes below the poverty line.

Abernathy pointed out in both the Medicare and Medicaid health payment programs the need to reverse the focus from institutionalization to outpatient services or Home Health Care.

Rep. Claude Pepper, Chairman of the Aging Committee, cited initiatives by Rep. Ford to include in a bill by the Health Subcommittee of Ways and Means two recommendations supported by the Committee which affect Home Health Care. They would eliminate the current requirement that individuals be hospitalized prior to receiving home care and eliminate the current 100 visit limit that exists in Medicare today for patients in their home.

Shriver commented, "I think the initiatives Congressman Ford has taken are excellent, terrific."

R. Sargent Shriver at Aging Hearing

FORD TAKES ACTIVE ROLE IN COMMITTEE